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Declaration

Against the backdrop of the debate on corporate social responsibility (CSR) at the European level, ETUC and a range of NGOs, including the Social Platform and Amnesty International, have always adopted a positive and constructive approach, and have been a constant source of proposals on that subject.

Nonetheless, there can be no denying the fact that the Multi-Stakeholder Forum ended up being a partial failure, for its final report did not secure the support of all the stakeholders.

In ETUC's view, the Forum's final report provided a snapshot of current debate. Some headway was successfully made, in the reference made to trade unions, the role of collective bargaining, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the connection between social dialogue and CSR. For the NGOs, the text was simply unacceptable in that form.

Having so far not received any response on the points that have remained unresolved in the debate after the Forum, the organisations signing this declaration wish to state their reasoned fear of an imbalanced, unilateral approach to CSR that only takes account of the views of a single actor.

Without calling into question the voluntary aspects of the CSR approach, we would like to reiterate that it is essential and fundamental that CSR be governed by rules and guidelines set at European level.

Therefore, at this stage of reflection, we reiterate these essential and non-exhaustive demands (further elements will follow on the part of the NGOs):

- companies' commitment to submitting an annual societal rapport on the social and environmental impact of their past activities;
- the promotion of standards covering all corporate governance (certification of end products, transparency and quality throughout the chain of production, including product traceability, subcontracting, supplies and delocalisations);
- criteria governing access to the use of Community funds and helping to make a positive selection;
- the production of a code of conduct and/or labels or similar acts within the framework of procedures and checks devised by the Commission, in conjunction with the unions and NGOs;
- the establishment of instruments and/or certification agencies that need to correspond to verified criteria, so as to determine their legitimacy and representativeness.

ETUC and the NGOs call upon the Commission and other stakeholders to take account of these claims and assume their responsibilities, this being a minimum precondition for the continuation of the process.

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